



Crimes against children

Exploitation via the Internet

The spread of the Internet and the anonymity it can provide, as well as technological advances such as high-speed connections and digital cameras, has made it easier for individuals with a sexual interest in children to record their activities, download files or share images online.

Child sexual exploitation on the Internet ranges from posed photos to visual recordings of brutal sexual crimes. The victim's suffering is likely to continue even after the actual abuse has stopped, as the Internet enables the images to be circulated indefinitely. Most producers fall into two broad categories: those with a sexual interest in children, and organized crime groups drawn to the huge profits involved by providing such images commercially.

Central point of contact

Because the Internet has no borders, uploading an illegal image essentially constitutes an international crime. Images can be easily taken and uploaded in one country and made available to anyone in the world with a computer and an Internet connection. Differing laws and police systems throughout the world necessitate the existence of a central body to collect, store, analyse and disseminate information on child exploitation on the Internet.

INTERPOL's unique position in the international law enforcement community gives it the resources and networks to fight this type of crime more effectively. One of the organization's main tools in achieving this is the INTERPOL Child Abuse Image Database (ICAID). Created in 2001, it contains hundreds of thousands of images of child sexual abuse submitted by member countries, thereby facilitating the sharing of images and information to help law enforcement agencies identify victims.

The ICAID uses image recognition software to compare details of where the abuse took place to connect images from the same series of abuse or images taken in the same location with different victims. Once a country of origin has been established, the images are sent to police in the countries concerned. The ICAID also allows INTERPOL to assist ongoing investigations by providing a mechanism for alerting authorities when new images are found.

Identifying victims and their nationalities and ascertaining when and where the images were taken is necessary for an international investigation to begin. Using the ICAID, investigators have been able to identify and rescue several hundred victims. The database has been endorsed by the G8, which also pledged more than 3 million to help INTERPOL develop a new and more sophisticated system which will be known as the International Child Sexual Exploitation Image (ICSE) Database.

The ICAID is currently available only at the INTERPOL General Secretariat, whereas the new ICSE Database will allow direct access for all member countries via the INTERPOL I-24/7 secure global police communications network. This will offer considerable advantages for dedicated child exploitation units across the world as investigators will be able to share information and evidence through a central resource, and receive instant responses to their queries.



How INTERPOL can help

The Organization promotes a holistic approach to fighting child exploitation on the Internet by encouraging countries to issue INTERPOL Green Notices, which can provide warnings and criminal intelligence on serious child offenders; co-ordinate joint operations between multiple member countries; and facilitate investigations at a regional level.

INTERPOL also assists in other important ways. A specialist working group of law enforcement investigators has been established to facilitate and enhance the investigation of sexual crimes against children, including the organization of training courses on computer-facilitated crimes against children, with support from governmental and non-governmental organizations and private industry. It also hosts best practice and victim identification workshops which bring together experts to work in a concerted and concentrated manner to devise strategies and identify victims of abuse.

Member countries can ask INTERPOL to issue Yellow Notices to help locate missing persons, especially minors. The General Secretariat also provides co-ordination and assistance in international operations, including training sessions, intelligence, briefings, analysis and technical advice.

A protective partnership

The dissemination of sexual images of children has evolved through the years in line with developments in printing and technology, from secret, localised clubs to readily available magazines and videos to websites and chat rooms. The growth of video and Internet technologies highlights the possibility of the emergence of more ways for criminals to manufacture and distribute child sexual abuse images such as video streaming on demand, webcam sessions or even virtual sexual abuse.

INTERPOL continues to work with Internet service providers, governments, non-governmental organizations and other international groups to devise strategies to identify abusers and victims, educate parents, develop safeguards to protect children, and encourage national governments to update existing laws to reflect changes in technology.

INTERPOL is a partner to the Virtual Global Taskforce which aims to build an effective, international partnership of law enforcement agencies to protect children from online sexual abuse.



www.interpol.int

Contact information

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For matters relating to specific crime cases, please contact your local police or the Interpol National Central Bureau in your country.